

WIMBLEDON CRACK WYCOMBE DEFENCE

Sports Mail Special Report

FACING one of their toughest Isthmian League tests of the season, away to powerful Wimbledon, Wycombe Wanderers spent most of their time on the defensive and were lucky to be beaten by only one goal.

Wimbledon: Kelly; Martin; Willis; Ardrey; Tolfrey; Wallis; Keats; Brown; Brookes; Hamm; Williams.

Wycombe Wanderers: Syrett; Beck; Lewis; Pullin; Royston; Gale; Worley; Thomas; Cooper; Horseman; Hodges.

Referee: R. Boyles.

Syrett was soon in action in face of competent assaults by the fast moving home forwards, and Wycombe narrowly escaped when a shot by Brown hit the bar.

It was nearly all Wimbledon early on, and Wycombe had to pack their goal to keep them out.

Syrett earned a spontaneous burst of applause by saving three crashing drives in rapid succession, and again for a smart clearance from a header by Keats.

Gale, who returned to the Wycombe side after his injury, and John Cooper brought in at number 9, had a busy time in a harassed defence.

With the link men so tied down, Wycombe's forwards lacked support and were rarely in the picture.

Prospects were not improved when Len Worley received a knock which left him hobbling.

The inevitable happened after 25 minutes of almost constant Wimbledon attack, when KEATS headed in neatly from Martin's pass.

BRIEF HOPES

Wycombe's hopes kindled briefly when Thomas almost found the mark from a corner, and when Worley, taking a free kick for a foul on himself, smacked in a terrific shot which almost carried Kelly back into his own net.

But Wimbledon still dictated the play and kept the Wanderers' defence constantly in action.

Half-time: Wimbledon 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0.

WYCOMBE IMPROVE

Wycombe looked much more businesslike in the second half, and with Gale and Pullin pressing up more strongly the Dons were having things much less their own way.

Brookes should have increased the home lead when a through pass put him clear of the backs. Syrett, who had a good game, managed to deflect the shot.

Although Wycombe had more of the play in this half, their forwards again failed to round-off promising approach play and seldom offered a serious threat to the home goal.

RESULT:

WIMBLEDON 1
WYCOMBE WAN. 0

WYCOMBE BID JUST FAILS

Wimbledon 1 Wycombe 0

STRANGE new tactics almost paid off for Wycombe Wanderers in their Isthmian League match against Wimbledon

Reserve wing half Johnny Cooper led the attack, but never moved out of his own half. Using only four forwards, Wycombe almost took a point from the champions and current League leaders.

Commented the Wycombe coach: "It was the first time we have tried our own version of the 4-2-4 line-up, and considering we held Wimbledon to a single goal I think it was successful."

Unbeaten Wimbledon fielded four reserves, but in the early stages hammered the Wycombe defence mercilessly, and only some fantastic work by goalkeeper Dennis Syrett prevented a goal rush.

But he had no chance when right-winger Brian Keats, one of the smallest players on the field, outjumped the entire Wycombe defence to head Wimbledon into the lead after 25 minutes.

Wimbledon goalkeeper Mike Kelly was never troubled in the first half, but when Wycombe settled down to their new tactics it was a different story after the interval.

And Wycombe deserved to share the points. Curling crosses from both wings kept the home defence at full stretch and inside-forward Tony Horseman and Dave Thomas went close with powerful headers.

Wycombe could have snatched a deserved equaliser had they switched to a five-man attack in the closing stages instead of sticking so rigidly to their new formation.